

**COUNT 1: Sandra Rutledge
Disciplinary Docket No. 2025-D090**

2. On February 9, 2016, the District of Columbia Probate Court found that Sandra Rutledge was unable to care for herself and appointed a guardian for her. *In re Rutledge*, 2015-INT-00512.

3. On August 29, 2016, the Court appointed Respondent as successor guardian for Ms. Rutledge.

4. Part of Respondent's duties as guardian was to keep apprised of Ms. Rutledge's physical and mental health, visit her, and report to the Court twice a year in writing about her living conditions, health, and the need, if appropriate, for the guardianship to continue.

5. Respondent failed to file a semi-annual guardian report by the August 10, 2019 deadline. The Probate Division noticed a summary hearing on the delinquent report for October 1, 2019. On September 17, 2019, Respondent filed the delinquent report.

6. Thereafter, Respondent failed to file reports in February 2020, August 2020, February 2021, August 2021, February 2022, and August 2022. The Probate Court scheduled a hearing for September 30, 2022, to address Respondent's sustained failure to comply with her responsibilities as Ms. Rutledge's guardian.

7. Ms. Rutledge died on July 4, 2020.

8. Respondent appeared before the Court on September 30, 2022, and at subsequent hearings on November 9, 2022, and January 17, 2023. At each hearing, the Court reminded Respondent of her obligation to file a guardianship report semi-annually in February and August and gave her additional time to file the missing reports.

9. During the September 2022 hearing, Respondent falsely told the Court that Ms. Rutledge was doing fine and had moved in with her mother because of the COVID epidemic. The Court ordered Respondent to file the missing guardianship reports and a change of address for Ms. Rutledge.

10. Respondent filed the overdue reports on January 17, 2023. She signed each report, making the following verification under oath:

I, Elizabeth Hughes, being first duly sworn, on oath, depose and say that I have read the foregoing pleadings by me subscribed and that the facts therein stated are true to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

11. One of the guardianship reports that Respondent filed on January 17, 2023, was for the reporting period of February 10, 2020, through August 10, 2020. Despite the fact that Ms. Rutledge died on July 4, 2020, Respondent swore in her report that she had visited her on July 19, 2020, and August 9, 2020. She also swore that Ms. Rutledge's physical and mental health

“[r]emained about the same” during the entire reporting period. She swore that Ms. Rutledge was “content” and reported that the guardianship should continue.

12. In the guardianship report that covered the reporting period of August 2020 to February 2021, Respondent stated that Ms. Rutledge had moved in with her daughter in December 2020 because of COVID, despite the fact that Ms. Rutledge died in July 2020. Respondent falsely claimed that she had visited Ms. Rutledge in August, September, October, and November 2020. Respondent claimed that she had not visited Ms. Rutledge thereafter because of COVID concerns, but that Ms. Rutledge’s physical and mental health remained the same, that she was content, and that the guardianship should continue.

13. Respondent also filed a change of address for Ms. Rutledge on January 17, 2023, that purported to formally inform the court of Ms. Rutledge’s alleged move to live with her daughter.

14. Ms. Rutledge did not move in with her daughter in December 2020, and had never moved in with her daughter (or her mother).

15. In the three additional reports Respondent filed on January 17, 2023, addressing the subsequent reporting periods up until August 2022, Respondent swore to similar false statements. Respondent falsely claimed that she had not visited Ms. Rutledge in person (allegedly because of COVID concerns), and continued to falsely swear that Ms. Rutledge’s physical and mental health remained

the same, that her address was the same, that she was content, and that the guardianship should continue.

16. Thereafter, Respondent failed to file guardianship reports in February 2023, August 2023, February 2024, and August 2024.

17. The Probate Court ordered a case review of the guardianship on March 11, 2025, requiring the Probate Division to appoint a reviewer to visit Ms. Rutledge, talk with her family and health care providers, and talk with Respondent. During that process, Ms. Rutledge's daughter informed the Probate Division that Ms. Rutledge had died in July 2020.

18. On April 22, 2025, the Probate Court terminated Respondent's guardianship and issued a show cause order for a hearing on May 12, 2025, requiring Respondent to explain why the court should not remove her from all appointed fiduciary roles and take further action against her.

19. During the May 12, 2025 hearing, the Court informed Respondent that she was "chronically late" with filing her guardianship reports for Ms. Rutledge and pointed out the many false statements Respondent made in the late-filed guardianship reports in the Rutledge matter given that the ward died in July 2020. Respondent acknowledged her misstatements in the Rutledge case and, despite having received notice of the hearing, claimed she needed to pull Ms. Rutledge's file before she could explain what happened. The Court ordered Respondent to explain

the false statements in the Rutledge matter and scheduled a further hearing for May 25, 2025.

20. During the May 25, 2025, hearing, Respondent stated that she visited Ms. Rutledge's apartment on an unspecified date, did not see her, but was told by a guard that Ms. Rutledge was in the building. She stated that she visited Ms. Rutledge's apartment again on a later—still unspecified--date and was told by a guard that Ms. Rutledge had moved in with her daughter. She offered no explanation about her continued false statements regarding further visits to see Ms. Rutledge, Ms. Rutledge's condition, and the need to continue the guardianship.

21. On May 29, 2025, Deputy Presiding Judge Michael O'Keefe of the Probate Division of the District of Columbia Superior Court referred Respondent to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel based on her conduct in the Rutledge matter.

22. Disciplinary Counsel notified Respondent about the bar complaint and subpoenaed Ms. Rutledge's client file on June 5, 2025.

23. Respondent requested and was granted additional time to respond to the bar complaint and provide documents responsive to the subpoena, but failed to meet the extended deadline.

24. On July 7, 2025, Disciplinary Counsel filed a motion to compel a written response to the bar complaint with the Board on Professional Responsibility

and a motion to enforce the subpoena with the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

25. Respondent did not respond to or otherwise oppose the motion to compel. On July 31, 2025, the Chair of the Board on Professional Responsibility ordered her to respond to Disciplinary Counsel's inquiries within 10 days. Respondent did not comply with the Board's order and, to date, has not responded to the bar complaint.

26. Respondent did not respond to or otherwise oppose the motion to enforce. On July 23, 2025, the Court of Appeals ordered her to comply with Disciplinary Counsel's June 5, 2025 subpoena within 10 days. Respondent did not comply with the court's order and, to date, has not complied with the subpoena.

27. Respondent violated the following District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct:

A. Rule 1.3(a), in that she failed to exercise diligence in her service as Successor Guardian for Sandra Rutledge;

B. Rule 1.3(c), in that she failed to act with reasonable promptness in serving as guardian;

C. Rule 3.3(a), in that she knowingly made false statements to a tribunal;

D. Rule 8.1(b), in that she knowingly failed to respond to Disciplinary Counsel's lawful demands for information;

E. Rule 8.4(c), in that she engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and/or misrepresentation;

F. Rule 8.4(d), in that she seriously interfered with the administration of justice; and

G. D.C. Bar Rule XI, § 2(b)(3), in that she failed to comply with orders of the Court and Board.

**COUNT 2: Lewis Matter
Disciplinary Docket No. 2023-D105**

28. In May 2023, Mary Lewis filed a bar complaint against Respondent alleging that Respondent was incompetent, failed to communicate with her, and neglected her three matters (a probate matter, a foreclosure matter, and a fraud matter).

29. On July 20, 2023, Disciplinary Counsel notified Respondent in writing about Ms. Lewis's bar complaint and requested a copy of Ms. Lewis's client files.

30. Respondent requested several enlargements of time to respond to the complaint and produce Ms. Lewis's files and was granted additional time even when she failed to timely request it.

31. By September 2023, Respondent had missed several deadlines and still had not produced Ms. Lewis's files or answered the bar complaint.

32. On September 28, 2023, Disciplinary Counsel filed a motion with the Board on Professional Responsibility to compel her response to the complaint.

33. Respondent did not oppose or otherwise address the motion and on October 11, 2023, the Board ordered Respondent to respond to Disciplinary Counsel's inquiries about Ms. Lewis's bar complaint within ten days.

34. Respondent did not comply with the Board's order.

35. Disciplinary Counsel continued to ask Respondent for Ms. Lewis's files and an answer to her bar complaint. On March 19, 2024, Disciplinary Counsel sent Respondent an additional set of written questions concerning her representation of Ms. Lewis.

36. On March 24, 2024, Respondent began to produce Ms. Lewis's client files but did not answer the bar complaint.

37. To date, Respondent still has not responded to the allegations in the bar complaint. Nor has Respondent answered the additional questions Disciplinary Counsel posed to her in March 2024.

38. Respondent violated the following District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct:

A. Rule 8.1(b), in that she knowingly failed to respond to Disciplinary Counsel's lawful demands for information;

B. Rule 8.4(d), in that she seriously interfered with the administration of justice; and

C. D.C. Bar Rule XI, § 2(b)(3), in that she failed to comply with an order of the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Hamilton P. Fox, III

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VERIFICATION

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that I verily believe the facts stated in the Specification of Charges to be true and correct.

Executed on this 25th day of August 2025.

Jerri U. Dunston

Jerri U. Dunston
Assistant Disciplinary Counsel

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT OF APPEALS
BOARD ON PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**



In the Matter of

ELIZABETH HUGHES,

Respondent,

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**Disciplinary Docket Nos.
2023-D105 and 2025-D090**

PETITION INSTITUTING FORMAL DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

A. This Petition (including the attached Specification of Charges, which is made part of this Petition) notifies Respondent that disciplinary proceedings are hereby instituted pursuant to Rule XI, § 8(c), of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals’ Rules Governing the Bar (D.C. Bar R.).

B. Respondent is an attorney admitted to practice before the District of Columbia Court of Appeals on the date stated in the caption of the Specification of Charges.

C. A lawyer member of a Hearing Committee assigned by the Board on Professional Responsibility (Board) pursuant to D.C. Bar R. XI, § 4(e)(5), has approved the institution of these disciplinary proceedings.

D. **Procedures**

(1) **Referral to Hearing Committee** – When the Board receives the

Petition Instituting Formal Disciplinary Proceedings, the Board shall refer it to a Hearing Committee.

(2) **Filing Answer** – Respondent must respond to the Specification of Charges by filing an answer with the Board and by serving a copy on the Office of Disciplinary Counsel within 20 days of the date of service of this Petition, unless the time is extended by the Chair of the Hearing Committee. Permission to file an answer after the 20-day period may be granted by the Chair of the Hearing Committee if the failure to file an answer was attributable to mistake, inadvertence, surprise, or excusable neglect. If a limiting date occurs on a Saturday, Sunday, or official holiday in the District of Columbia, the time for submission will be extended to the next business day. Any motion to extend the time to file an answer, and/or any other motion filed with the Board or Hearing Committee Chair, must be served on the Office of Disciplinary Counsel at the address shown on the last page of this petition.

(3) **Content of Answer** – The answer may be a denial, a statement in exculpation, or a statement in mitigation of the alleged misconduct. Any charges not answered by Respondent may be deemed established as provided in Board Rule 7.7.

(4) **Mitigation** – Respondent has the right to present evidence in

mitigation to the Hearing Committee regardless of whether the substantive allegations of the Specification of Charges are admitted or denied.

(5) **Process** – Respondent is entitled to fifteen days’ notice of the time and place of hearing, to be represented by counsel, to cross-examine witnesses, and to present evidence.

E. In addition to the procedures contained in D.C. Bar R. XI, the Board has promulgated Board Rules relating to procedures and the admission of evidence which are applicable to these procedures. A copy of these rules is being provided to Respondent with a copy of this Petition.

WHEREFORE, the Office of Disciplinary Counsel requests that the Board consider whether the conduct of Respondent violated the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct, and, if so, that it impose/recommend appropriate discipline.

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